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Reagan focuses on quelling violence

By Jeremiah O'Leary
 and Mary Belcher
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As reports of troop movements in the Philippines reached the White House yesterday, President Reagan threatened to immediately cut off military aid if the Marcos government uses it to attack other Filipinos.

Mr. Reagan met with his national security advisers for more than an hour to discuss the chaos in the Philippines, where two of President Ferdinand Marcos' former aides have seized control of the Defense Ministry.

Mr. Reagan fell short of demanding Mr. Marcos' resignation, moving instead to quell the mounting potential for violence. The president relayed his warning to Mr. Marcos through diplomatic channels, according to White House spokesman Larry Speakes.

"President Reagan appealed earlier today to President Marcos to

avoid an attack on other elements of the Filipino armed forces," Mr. Speakes said late yesterday afternoon. "Regrettably, there are now reports of an attack."

The first reports of tear gas use and tank movements by Mr. Marcos' troops in Manila reached the White House as Mr. Reagan met with his senior advisers.

"An attempt to resolve this situation by force will surely result in bloodshed and casualties, further polarize Filipino society and cause untold damage to the relationship between our governments," Mr. Speakes said.

"We cannot continue our existing military assistance if the government uses that aid against other elements of the Filipino military which enjoys substantial popular backing," he said.

The United States sent the Philippines \$55 million in military aid this year and plans to grant it \$100 million in fiscal 1987.

Mr. Speakes said Mr. Reagan will

cut off military aid immediately if he determines that U.S. arms are being used by the Marcos government.

Members of Congress have urged the president to call for Mr. Marcos' resignation, but Mr. Speakes said it is not the president's "prerogative" to do so.

"The president believes that the matter of effective government in the Philippines is a matter to be determined by the Philippine people, and we will await the decision of the Philippine people on this," Mr. Speakes said. "It is not a matter for us to say."

Mr. Marcos said yesterday on NBC-TV's "Meet The Press" he did not expect Mr. Reagan to ask him to resign.

"I do not believe that he will do so," Mr. Marcos said. "I do not believe that he will derogate or degrade our constitution by forcing aside the proclamation, the canvass, by our parliament."

The question at the White House last night was not whether Mr. Marcos should remain in power, but how to turn off the violence.

Mr. Speakes said a peaceful resolution was "certainly possible," even if Mr. Marcos did not step down. "The important thing is to avoid bloodshed so both sides can find a peaceful solution," he said.

Mr. Speakes said the administration has not received a request for asylum of safe refuge from Mr. Marcos. But, he said, "the president would certainly look toward any way to resolve this matter peacefully."

The White House two days ago denounced as fraudulent the Feb. 7 presidential elections in which Mr. Marcos claimed victory.

The statement, issued Saturday by Mr. Speakes, said the election fraud was "so extreme as to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the election and impair the capacity of the government of the Philippines to cope with a growing insurgency and a troubled economy."

Although the White House did not call for Mr. Marcos' resignation, it voiced support for the Marcos aides — Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos — who turned against the government Saturday.

Mr. Speakes said the administration has been in contact with the rebel leaders.

As the situation worsened yesterday, Mr. Reagan was briefed by Special Ambassador Philip Habib, who returned late Saturday from a 10-day mission to the Philippines.

Mr. Speakes would not comment on Mr. Habib's recommendations to the president, nor would he specify what the White House told Mr. Marcos yesterday.

In addition to Mr. Habib, the president met with Vice President George Bush, Secretary of State George Shultz, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, Treasury Secretary James Baker, CIA Director William Casey, Chief of Staff Donald Regan, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. P.I. Kelley and National Security Adviser John Poindexter.

"The American people are watching with great concern and compassion the events unfolding in the Philippines, a long time friend and ally," Mr. Speakes said, following the meeting.

"The president urges in the strongest possible terms that violence be avoided as Filipinos of good will work to resolve the ongoing crisis," he said.

The United States has vital need for continued use of its bases at Subic Bay and Clark Field. If Mr. Marcos survives this challenge to his authority and loses U.S. military assistance, he is not likely to permit the bases agreement to remain in force.

On the other hand, Corazon Aquino, who opposed Mr. Marcos in the Feb. 7 election, opposes continued use of the bases by American forces. The rebel officers, should they win out in this confrontation, are the best bet for preservation of the U.S. bases.